

Book Reviews.

HYPNOTISM AND ITS APPLICATION TO PRACTICAL MEDICINE. By Otto George Wetterstrand, M. D. Translated from the German edition by Henrick G. Petersen, M.D. Together with Medical Letters on Hypno-Suggestion, Etc., by Henrick G. Petersen, M.D. G. P. Putnam's Sons.

This little volume, which is dedicated to Dr. Liébeault, the founder of the Nancy School of Hypnotism, is not to be regarded as a treatise on hypnotic suggestion, for it consists, as its author states, "of unpretentious notes by a physician who, under the pressure of a fatiguing and engrossing practice, has not been able to develop his rich material into a more complete form;"—and the work should be judged accordingly.

The 117 pages of which the book consists are devoted very largely to the description of individual instances of disease in which hypnotic suggestion has been used for its therapeutic effects, together with comments on the results. The book is thus of an essentially practical character, and its value to practitioners depends mainly on the accuracy of the observations that are described, and on the possibility that similar therapeutic results can be obtained by other practitioners.

If it be true that the writer's experience is the record of cases observed with painstaking care and the insight which comes from broad clinical culture, this record of experience is surely of value to medical men. If, however, the author has approached his subject along a narrow path and with more enthusiasm than judgment, we can hardly be congratulated on having another book of a kind already too plentiful.

The basis of successful use of hypnotism for therapeutic purposes is necessarily the ability to render patients susceptible to suggestion. Wetterstrand has had a large measure of success in the induction of suggestible states, for of 3148 persons hypnotized only 97 failed to respond to his suggestion.

The author agrees with Liébeault, Bernheim and Forel that nearly every one is susceptible. He finds that age is an important factor in determining suggestibility, that persons under thirty are especially suggestible, and that all children from three or four to fifteen years of age are without exception hypnotizable. In the case of persons who cannot be rendered susceptible by the usual methods of hypnotizing Wetterstrand recommends the inhalation of chloroform, which was first used by Rifat of Salonika, for the purpose of overcoming such voluntary or involuntary resistance as the subject may offer, and of rendering him somnambulistic. There seems to be good evidence that the susceptibility to suggestion may in some instances be increased by the use of chloroform, but it is questionable whether the use of an anæsthetic for this purpose is likely ever to meet with the approval of representative English-speaking practitioners, however it may be regarded on the continent. In connection with the question of susceptibility it may not be out of place for the reviewer to give expression to the belief, based upon some experience with hypnotism that the average American citizen of American parentage, owing perhaps to greater curiosity and greater independence of thought and action, is considerably more difficult to hypnotize than the average continental citizen of corresponding social status.

While it is not within the scope of this review to present or discuss Wetterstrand views as to the numerous symptoms

and types of disease in which he has made use of hypnotism as a therapeutic agent, it is desirable to indicate the author's attitude toward representative forms of disease. We may select for this purpose some of the statements that are made with reference to insomnia, habitual headache, organic paralyses, hysteria, incontinence of urine, and external diseases. There can be no doubt that hypnotism is sometimes of great service in the production of sleep in nervous but healthy persons who are suffering from insomnia as the consequence of unusual nervous influences, such as worry, grief, etc. But it is surprising to hear that a woman who for seven years had been in the habit of lying awake for a large part of the night should be cured by an hypnotic séance with the aid of a few drops of chloroform. We do not wish to question the accuracy of this and similar observations, but think the author sometimes displays undue readiness to believe in the efficacy of his treatment,—for example as when he says, speaking of a case of insomnia cured by him: "I have not heard from him (the patient) since he returned home, but I have every reason to believe that his sleep continues satisfactory." In the section on habitual headaches a number of cases are described in which the head pains of neurotic individuals were greatly benefited. Here again the author seems to have been rather surprisingly successful. The reviewer is quite committed to the belief that most headaches ought to be treated by means directed against their cause, but that hypnotism should be tried where other means have failed, and that it occasionally is distinctly helpful in the relief of pain. The section on hysteria, though shorter than could be desired, is perhaps the best in the volume, in the sense that it displays the critical faculty in higher degree than it is elsewhere to be seen. In the pages on paralyses of organic nature we are startled by reading that an old hemiplegic who "could not lift the arm, which hung down powerless," was "completely cured almost after the first treatment!" "The paralysis had disappeared completely after six treatments and no difference could be discovered in the muscular strength of the left and the right arm." Neurologists are familiar with the spontaneous variations which occur from time to time in the power of hemiplegic patients, and there is some reason to think that suggestion may at times be capable of temporarily improving some paralyses, perhaps through altering the conditions of the circulation about the destructive lesion; but conservative men are not yet prepared to admit that a paralysis dependent on a lesion in the motor path can be even temporarily abolished by any form of psychic influence. In this particular instance we cannot but suspect that Wetterstrand either deceived himself in regard to the results of his treatment or erred in diagnosis.

In the section on incontinence of urine several instructive instances of improvement or cure are described as the result of suggestive therapeutics, together with some failures and relapses. The reviewer regards incontinence of urine in children as one of the conditions best adapted to the therapeutic use of hypnotism, and believes that practitioners will come in time to recognize the advantages of using suggestion for this purpose. In the author's short section on external diseases may be detected further indications of undue faith in the efficacy of suggestion directed against structural pathological conditions. A boy whose knee had been painful and swollen for about a month, as the result of a blow, limped into the author's office on October 13th, 1887. "The leg was in a semi-flexed position, and he (the patient) could not bend nor extend it. The joint was swollen considerably, with strong fluctuation." After hypnotization the patient could walk without limping; "all sensitiveness and pain had disappeared, and the joint could be bent and extended without any in-

convenience." On October 14th "the effusion had almost disappeared, but was still visible." It is within the limits of possibility that all this happened exactly as described, but the writer unfortunately makes the impression that he is unintentionally exaggerating his therapeutic results.

Enough has been said to show that the observations contained in this little volume are marred by indications of excessive credulity or loose observation on the part of the author. The histories of remarkable therapeutic results in organic cases would certainly have come nearer to convincing us of their accuracy had the clinical conditions been minutely and scientifically described. Although the looseness of description which characterises some of the histories detracts materially, in the reviewer's opinion, from the scientific value of the volume, it by no means destroys its interest. The book contains many observations which are probably truthful descriptions of the author's experience, and are well worth examination by those who are interested in determining the therapeutic value of hypnotism. It is just because the book contains so much that is interesting that we regret its shortcomings. The subject of hypnotism seems to attract especially persons of the artistic temperament, in whom the imagination often has undue sway. The writings of such persons, through their exaggerations, repel many sober-minded men, and thus the *facts* of hypnotism are being admitted more slowly by the medical public than might otherwise be the case. Kraft-Ebing in his recent "*Psychiatrischen Arbeiten*" shows how satisfactorily hypnotic observations may be presented by one who is a thoroughly trained observer. We still need in this field the mature and original judgment of men who have had long years of training in the methods of modern and scientific internal medicine.

The last quarter of the volume before us is devoted to medical letters on hypno-suggestion, etc., by the translator. These letters treat of hypnotic subjects in a general and rather diffuse manner, and can hardly be said to contain any information not already at our disposal. The section entitled, "*Music, not Sermons in Insane Hospitals*," elaborates a good idea, but unless the lyres of Orpheus are more tuneful than they usually are in public institutions, it may be questioned whether the frigid, grey-toned sermon is not the lesser of two evils. The translator's attitude toward thought transference and the starting up of "molecular action" in one brain by another is rather amusingly illustrated in the first letter. This does not detract from such general interest as his letters may possess, but it cannot fail to make us call in question, whether justly or unjustly, the accuracy of any personal views the writer may hold on the therapeutic value of hypnotism. The difficulty with the mental attitude of the man who firmly believes some things that have not been proved, is that he is at any moment liable to confound fact and fancy.

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HYSTERIA AND CERTAIN ALLIED CONDITIONS, THEIR NATURE AND TREATMENT WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO THE APPLICATION OF THE REST CURE, MASSAGE, ELECTRICAL THERAPY, HYPNOTISM, ETC. By George J. Preston, M.D. P. Blakiston & Co., Philadelphia, Pa. 1897.

In this treatise of 298 pages, Dr. Preston has given a very full account of the protean manifestations of hysteria and of the various methods that have been suggested for the treatment of the disease.

The historical data collected in Chapter I., the review of the various theories regarding the ætiology and pathology of the disease given in Chapter II., are well calculated to give the special student such facts as he needs before taking up the further study of this interesting